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# Fact Sheet

## Veterinary Services

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## Veterinary Accreditation

CATALOGING PREP.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) established the veterinary accreditation program in 1921 so that private practitioners can assist Federal veterinarians working to control animal diseases. Today, USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), private veterinary practitioners, and State animal health officials work cooperatively in the accreditation program to prevent, control, and eradicate livestock and poultry diseases that can negatively affect producers and consumers in the United States.

Accredited veterinarians carry out many official inspection, testing, and certification functions for APHIS throughout the United States. The accreditation program is truly the backbone of U.S. regulatory programs for livestock and poultry diseases. Businesses that export animals also rely on the expertise of accredited veterinarians. Accredited veterinarians assure that newly acquired animals will not introduce diseases into the livestock populations of another State or country.

### A Partnership in Regulatory Medicine

The veterinary accreditation program is founded on the mutual respect and professional partnership between public and private practitioners. This partnership has served the animal industries well for many years and is critical for the future growth and well-being of the food animal and equine industries. With the continuing trend toward a global agricultural economy, APHIS and accredited veterinarians must work together even more closely in support of American agriculture.

### The Benefits of Becoming Accredited

By participating in the accreditation program, private practitioners can offer broader services to their clients. Large-animal practitioners need accreditation to assist producers with selling, buying, and transporting healthy animals—as well as containing outbreaks of disease. Small-animal practitioners use their accreditation authority to meet certification requirements for domestic and international movement of pet animals.

### A New National System

On November 23, 1992, APHIS established accreditation on a national rather than a State level. Creating a national system helps APHIS ensure that enough qualified veterinarians are available across the country to assist with the agency's mission of controlling and preventing diseases. This national system also standardizes accreditation application procedures and requirements for uniform administration of the program.

### New Requirements for Accreditation

APHIS also revised the requirements for veterinary accreditation and replaced the veterinary accreditation written examination with a uniform, comprehensive orientation program.

Veterinary accreditation orientations include the following topics:

- Federal animal health laws, regulations, and rules;
- Interstate movement requirements for animals;
- Import and export requirements for animals;
- USDA programs to control or eradicate specific animal diseases;
- Laboratory support in confirming disease diagnoses; and
- Ethical and professional responsibilities of accredited veterinarians.

### Application Procedures

Any veterinarian or veterinary student can request an application for accreditation (Veterinary Services [VS] Form 1-36A) from the nearest USDA-APHIS-VS area office. The area veterinarian-in-charge (AVIC) for that State will review the completed application and forward it to the State animal health official for endorsement. The AVIC and State official will sign the form. Then, the applicant can schedule an orientation session through the local VS office.

To qualify for accreditation, applicants must be a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine or hold an equivalent degree and be licensed to practice without supervision in States where they desire to perform accredited duties.



## Required Professional Skills

Colleges of veterinary medicine have cooperated with APHIS by incorporating into their curricula the information and skills that veterinarians need to become accredited. Applicants must also certify that they can:

- Perform physical examinations of individual animals and visually inspect herds or flocks to determine whether animals show signs of communicable diseases.
- Recognize common breeds of livestock and be able to record this information on official documents.
- Identify animals in interstate commerce by recognizing brucellosis tattoos, calfhood vaccination tags, and State-of-origin eartags.
- Estimate the age of livestock using a dental formula.
- Apply an eartag, tattoo, backtag, and legband.
- Certify the disease status of a poultry flock through evaluating the owner's record of participation and testing in Federal and State poultry health programs.
- Properly complete certificates for domestic and international movement of animals.
- Perform an official necropsy on livestock.
- Recognize the clinical signs and lesions of foreign animal diseases.
- Plan a disease-control strategy for a livestock unit.
- Vaccinate for brucellosis and correctly fill out the vaccination certificate.
- Draw and ship blood for testing.
- Perform a caudal-fold test for bovine tuberculosis.
- Develop appropriate cleaning and disinfection plans to control the spread of communicable livestock diseases.
- Explain the basic principles used in APHIS or APHIS-State cooperative programs for control of diseases, such as brucellosis, pseudorabies, and tuberculosis.

The local VS office will provide the candidate for accreditation with a letter of approval and a certificate of veterinary accreditation after the candidate has met all application requirements and information has been verified.

## Other Changes

Accredited veterinarians who wish to perform accreditation duties in other States no longer have to submit separate applications. However, the accredited veterinarian must notify the AVIC of the new State about his or her wish to do accredited work. The AVIC may require that the accredited veterinarian participate in a supplemental orientation about information and issues pertinent to that State.

## Shared Responsibilities for Protecting Animal Health

More than 82 percent of all U.S. veterinarians are accredited. Most veterinary students now obtain the privilege of accreditation upon graduation from veterinary school. Becoming accredited may seem to be relatively routine, but the responsibilities are extraordinarily important. In fact, few other countries rely upon the private veterinary practitioner for official inspection and certification to the same extent as the United States. It is, therefore, vital that the responsibilities of each partner—the APHIS veterinarian and the accredited veterinarian—be clearly understood, that the accreditation program be administered equitably, and that the integrity of the program be maintained.

## For More Information

To learn more about the veterinary accreditation program, contact your local VS area office or contact:

USDA, APHIS, VS  
Veterinary Accreditation Program  
Room 700, Federal Building  
6505 Belcrest Road  
Hyattsville, MD 20782

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